

## ART. II.—CONTRIBUTIONS TO NERVOUS AND MENTAL PATHOLOGY.

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## VI.—RACE AND INSANITY.

THERE is one question related to the etiological problems involved in the study of insanity, regarding which the information furnished in the hand-books is meagre and vague, and yet which from an anthropological, if not from other points of view, is an extremely interesting one.

Several years ago, while engaged in a series of investigations on the somatic etiology of insanity, I drew this question within the range of my studies; and as the New York City Asylum for the Insane, at which, without holding any official position, I was, through the kindness of a friend, collecting some material for clinical and pathological investigation, offered an excellent field for the study of the relations of race to insanity, I set about utilizing this opportunity.

Dr. Kiernan, at that time an *interne* at the institution named, at a great sacrifice of time and with a readiness that I must gratefully acknowledge, set on foot an enumeration intended to show the relation, first, of races to insanity in general, and then of each race to each particular form of insanity. The Doctor was the better able to furnish me with a reliable and exhaustive summary, as the statistical labors of the institution were at that time, and had been for some years, mainly, if not exclusively, in his hands, and his knowledge of the languages enabled him to track out what would in other hands have probably proved very problematical nativities. I need not add that an analysis of hundreds of cases, from a clinical point of view, carried on single handed, was alone an immense labor.

At the time when I had proposed to utilize the statistics, these were not in such shape or sufficiently perfect to permit me to draw any conclusions from them. Several factors had

necessarily must be, I present them for the purpose of eliciting such comment and correction as they call for. And if they have done nothing else, I trust they have shown what an important field of study has been neglected by the physicians of our asylums, and notably by the Commissioner in Lunacy of the State of New York.

There is a special provision in the law of the State to the effect that that officer is to collect such statistics and other data regarding the insane of this State as may be of interest.

What inquiry could have been more easily made, what figures would have proven more interesting, than such as would show the influence of race, of emigration, of sex, and of social conditions on the production of different forms of insanity? Unfortunately, here, as in all other branches of the science of psychiatry, it seems not only that all suggestions must come from without, but also that before they can be adopted by those who hold the opportunities for investigation in a monopolizing grasp, the adamant wall of indifference and incompetency will have to be penetrated.

So far as the tables herewith presented permit of an answer to the question, as to the influence race has on insanity, the following may be stated :

*On the whole, the different forms of insanity occur in nearly the same proportions in the Anglo-Saxon, Teutonic, Celtic, and Hebrew races; paralytic insanity is most common among Anglo-Saxons and least common among Negroes; melancholia is most common among the Germanic peoples; the tendency to terminal dementia is greater in the Anglo-Saxon than in the German or Celt; and the forms dependent upon hereditary taint are most common among Hebrews.*

*With this it is in accord, that since the termination in dementia and the influence of heredity are the factors which chiefly cause an accumulation of the insane population, that the Hebrew and the Anglo-Saxon should have the highest proportions insane of their respective populations.*